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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the procedures used at the University of Cincinnati for establishing a field based elementary teacher education program in the form of a field guide. The first step involves a meeting with university faculty to discuss the implications of such a program. Step two involves meeting with the elementary school principal and selling the proposed program. Step three requires approaching the elementary school faculty, describing the program to them, emphasizing both pros and cons. The final step requires that the principal have latitude to make his decision. He should make the final contact either accepting or rejecting the proposal. Additionally the paper stresses a number of points crucial to the successful selling and functioning of a field based education program: (1) in the discussion with university faculty it is essential that they realize that they have no authority over public school teachers and their students, or the school building, and that they internalize the concept of working with elementary school faculty; (2) in talking with the principal, present a full assessment of the advantages college students in the program provide for the school; (3) in talking with the elementary school faculty, it is important to be brief, emphasize the cooperative nature of the venture, and present the list of services from which they will benefit; and finally (4) ensure that the supervising faculty and the college students involved become immersed in the elementary school environment through such activities as reading the school bulletin and joining the PTA. (DMT)

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The Move to Field Based Teacher Education: A Practical Guide for Field Hands

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After having carefully considered three years of a field-based elementary teacher education program at the University of Cincinnati, I've concluded that the procedures used in establishing our program are worth sharing. This practical type of information could be useful to other "field hands" just beginning to move into field-based operations.

Step one is to meet with the university faculty and discuss the implications of the move. All must be in agreement that the principal is in charge of the building and has the final say in all matters pertaining to his building and his teachers. It must be thoroughly understood that the university faculty have no authority what-so-ever over a public school teacher, and no evaluative or judgmental responsibilities to the principal or the central public school office. Further, the university faculty must realize that they as well as their students work in that elementary building at the pleasure of the public school faculty. Finally, the university faculty must internalize the concept that, by working WITH the elementary principal and faculty, their college students will benefit tremendously by learning experiences that arise daily in an elementary school.

Next, go to the principal and make an offer. Actually, this is the most fun. It's fascinating to see a principal change from his immediate reaction, to one of listening, to finally an attitude of "you have been sent from heaven to help me." Most principals have a typical first reaction—something like, "With all the problems I already have, why in the world would I in my right mind take on an additional class in my building of 30 college students (hippies included) and two college faculty?" Before this gets set in his mind, start immediately to list the things you and your students can do for him. Some examples are listed below:

- Your students will provide extra help for his teachers.
- College assignments will be coordinated with his curriculum and will provide enrichment activities for his pupils and resources for his teachers.
- The college students will accompany teachers on field trips and do follow-up activities with the elementary students.
- The college students can conduct after-school activities.
- The college students can make special presentations during Book Week, Holidays, etc.
- College students and faculty could cover all the second grade classes (for example) while the teachers have a special meeting. Be sure that your university faculty hold elementary teaching certificates and can assume legal control of a class.

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- College students or faculty can cover a room until the substitute arrives. This warms the heart of any elementary principal.
- College students can serve as tutors for elementary pupils.
- College faculty will serve as consultants to the teachers.
- College students can start a math or reading lab.
- College students will assume responsibility for hall displays and bulletin boards. This seems to be the favorite of the teachers.

By this time the principal is listening intently and the shift has taken place. At this very moment ask to speak to the faculty and let them decide if they would like to have you based in the building. The principal should be impressed with your openness and sense of responsibility and cooperation.

Assuming everything went well, your next hurdle is to speak to the faculty. Several important points need to be stressed here. First, make it short. The faculty will still remember the endless hours of college lecture classes that they attended. Emphasize the fact that this would be a cooperative adventure WITH them. Make a clear statement stressing that university faculty have no supervisory responsibilities. Run down the list of services that you and your students could provide for them and their students. During my first assignment Dr. Alice M. Stadthaus and I made a film of the college students working with elementary students. Careful editing made it a very convincing statement of our usefulness in a building. Assure the faculty that any student assigned to participate in their classroom who becomes more trouble than s/he is worth will be removed immediately. Finally, ask the faculty to work WITH you in designing and working out a viable program that will help you and them, the university students and the elementary pupils.

Ask the principal to notify you of the decision and leave. If an elementary faculty does not want you in a building, both you and your students are better off not working there. As your program evolves and gets better each year, soon you'll have schools asking you to come.

The principal has called. You're in! What next? The technicalities and logistics must be handled first. These small things can get you off on the wrong foot. Set your starting time after the elementary classes have started. This reduces the building traffic at a chaotic time and assures that the elementary teachers will get the best parking places. Try to keep the college students out of the already crowded and harassed office. Make your lunch time before or after the school children's so that the teachers can have the places in the lunch room and lounge. Strange as it may seem, the teachers' bathroom can be a point of contention. Remember elementary teachers do not have much free time and I've never been in an elementary building with facilities enough to accommodate 32 extra persons during a 45-minute lunch period. Make provisions to keep your keys if you stay in the building late. If there is a dress code, see to it that you and your students dress accordingly. Read the school bulletin daily; see that the college students do also. They need to know how a school really operates. You can pick up useful ideas from the bulletin. Volunteer your room to conduct the Thanksgiving assembly, etc. Find out about fire drills and have your college students participate and maintain the straightest and quietest line during the drill. You and your class should join the P-TA. This phase of the operation focuses on you and your class becoming an integral part of everything

that goes on in that building. Our program consists of two quarters prior to student teaching, and we have found that our students are thoroughly familiar with technical and operational procedures in elementary schools and can begin the actual teaching phase of student teaching before other students who are not so familiar with and comfortable in elementary buildings.

You're ready for field based college classes. The two most useful ideas I've found in this phase of the operation are modeling and justification for being there. Consider modeling. The room should be a model classroom. Work with your students in arranging and designing it for effective learning. Don't talk about learning centers, make some. Individualized instruction, active/involved learning, lesson planning, technical competence... everything we've ever preached about to college students must be modeled by the college faculty. Being in the spotlight, so to speak, is a tremendously challenging, and, I must admit, frightening position, but a position that can improve not only your instruction but that of prospective teachers and will have an influence on the teachers in that building.

Every day the university faculty must think about the justification for operating out of the elementary building. If your university classes stay in their room and don't use the resources available to them, then you might as well be on campus in an air-conditioned room that doesn't smell like an elementary school. Invite the principal, the supervisors, the counselors, the teachers to speak to your classes. They all, for years, have wanted a hand in teacher preparation. Invite other college faculty to participate. The biology department at the University helped us with our combined college/6th grade science project. A member of the psychology department is now visiting regularly to discuss learning theory with the college students. Invite the teachers to sit in on special presentations if you can arrange them during their after-school working period.

Once you've established a non-threatening atmosphere of cooperation, it becomes contagious. College students see and suggest ways they can contribute to the school. My last class designed and decorated the once dull lunch room using the metric system as a theme. Children were encouraged to record their height in meters by signing their name on the appropriate place on a large colorful chart. The elementary faculty begins to suggest activities. The fifth grade teacher invited my class to take part in the lesson he was particularly excited about. There is nothing wrong with learning WITH anybody, even fifth graders. I taught a science discovery lesson to a combined class of sixth graders and my college students. That there are some smart sixth graders in my school, was one discovery the college students made. The Cincinnati Nature Center is taking part in the science program at our school. My students take part in the faculty committee formed to design and write a proposal for a new reading program. This list is not exhaustive, but representative of things that actually happened. I have every reason to predict that more and even better things will be proposed and accomplished WITH the elementary school, the university and community agencies.

Field based teacher training programs are exciting, rewarding, demanding and difficult. They are worth it.